



The TREE - of LIFE

Reducing Poverty

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President's letter

President's letter: SDG 1 Reducing Poverty

Poverty is defined as a state of being extremely poor. It is a state where one lacks access to basic needs such as shelter, clothing, food, and clean water. It is vital to note that poverty continues to be a challenge, especially in Africa, but also in other countries in the world. This article is meant to list several ways of alleviating poverty as well as cite some action points to help us as we bear fruit that will last.

The early church moved among the poor who were not too poor to be concerned for one another's welfare (2 Corinthians 8: 2-5, 9-18), drawing inspiration from Christ's leaving heavenly riches for earthly poverty. As children of God, it is important that we emulate what Christ did and follow His footsteps. The word of God reminds us: "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith help him? If a brother or a sister is naked and destitute of daily food and one of you says to them 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled' but do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead." We need to be proactive and relevant in reaching out to the poor as women of faith to alleviate poverty. We can do this through:

1. Education

There is an English saying, "Give a man a fish and feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime." Through education, poverty is reduced as people are empowered with skills and knowledge. "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17)

2. Self-Empowerment

In order to reduce poverty, it is wise to save money or resources in preparation for the future. This can be in the form of "konde – konde" or "qogelela" (in Shona and Ndebele languages), which means bringing together money or other resources for someone poor, saving to assist for the future. "Give

a portion to seven, or even to eight, for you know not what may happen on earth." (Ecclesiastes 11:2) There is power in numbers. Young people and women can team up and start a project and then approach financial institutions with what they have saved for more capital. When a girl child is empowered, it also reduces cases of child marriages.

3. Good Stewardship

In reducing poverty there is a need for diligence in managing whatever resources God gives us. It is important that consistency is maintained and that we are good stewards so that we do not abuse and waste God's resources. Proverbs 21:5 says that "the plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty."

4. Give and Give

There is so much poverty in the world because we make excuses that we don't have enough to give to others. However, we learn that the early Christians shared whatever resources they had even in their poverty. (Acts 2:45, 4:32-37) The believers had a common goal of reducing poverty and shared resources. If Christians could give, work together, and let go of only focusing on themselves, poverty reduction would not be a mammoth task.

Conclusion

It is said that "It takes a village to raise a child." In the same vein, it takes a community to reduce poverty. If one person can adopt another who is struggling in her community, surely poverty reduction will be doable. Let us pray for pure hearts when giving to the poor and to give as much as we can and that those who are already implementing poverty alleviation to continue and not be weary of doing good. As Federation sisters, we are called to go and bear fruit, not just fruit, but fruit that will last.

- *Sipiwe Chisvo, World President*



Editor's word:

Success in any stage of life - part 2



“Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead...” (Philippians 3:13)

This summer I read a great book, that I already told you about in my last article, called *Live Life in Crescendo: Your Most Important Work Is Always Ahead of You*, which

encourages people who are in the second part of their lifespan to believe that greater things are ahead. The name of the book comes from the crescendo sign in music. In music, the term crescendo is used as a dynamic marking to indicate a gradual increase in volume or intensity.

Many people think that they are too old to do something for society, or that it is too late to start something new in their life, but the authors show that this age – middle age or even old age – is the best time to start, because this is the age when you have accumulated experience, knowledge, skills, even money. The writers encourage the reader to think how their life would change if they adopted the perspective that the most important contributions, and even their real happiness, do not belong to their past, but to their FUTURE.

And all this cannot happen without hope. Many times, we forget to hope. Situations in our lives make us so desperate, so weary, that we lose hope. I know this too well because I am not an optimist by nature. I was always waiting for something bad to happen. Now, I am expecting good things as I realized I was sinning. At the same time, I do not know about the churches in other countries, but in mine, we rarely focus on hope. I have heard many sermons on faith in the church, but I do not think I have heard one on hope. Even worse, these two terms are often presented as antonyms, the emphasis being that the only good thing is to have faith. Still, in the Bible, hope is presented as one of the most important things one can have: “And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (Corinthians 13:13) This year, one of my relatives had a burden on his life and went to Italy. There he was talking with a Catholic priest about his life and the priest told him: “You have a big sin in your life.” My relative was shocked. The priest continued: “You do not have hope!” As this

person went out of the church, the priest was shouting: “Always have hope! Always!” What a beautiful lesson for life: no matter the circumstances, no matter how old we are, to always have hope for our future. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

Maybe your career is over, but the contribution you can make to this world IS NOT. It is the time when your contribution can be more intense than ever. Have hope for your dreams and believe that God is there to help you make a difference in this world that is in such need. Maybe you can start that project you have always dreamt about, maybe you can take care of somebody's kids while they are at work and they do not have somebody to rely on, maybe you can constantly visit somebody who is alone in the hospital, maybe you can teach a child to play an instrument, maybe you can repair something for somebody, maybe you can volunteer in an organization, maybe you can be more involved in the church – the list is endless. Dream.

NEW THINGS (Romanian song)

Stop thinking about what was 'before'
Stop looking at old, past things.
Behold I will do,
I will do new things!

Great works you will see,
More than before
I have new things to do
And it's about to happen,
Behold, I will do
I will do new things!

C: I will make a way, even through the wilderness,
In dry places living water will flow
Behold, I will do, I will do new things!
I give you My Spirit, I clothe you in strength.
Nations will know My ways.
Behold, I will do, I will do new things!

Tell the weak, be strong, and fear not
Strengthen your hands, in Me you trust,
Behold, I will do, I will do new things!

C: /: Then the lame will jump
the blind will see,
the deaf will hear,
And the voice of the mute will sing! : /

-Ligia Istrate, *Tree of Life* Editor

Bearing good fruit (Matthew 7:15-20)

Greetings to the Wesleyan sisterhood in this God-given Universe!

We continue to fellowship and share the word of God so that we grow spiritually each and every day. As women, despite carrying heavy responsibilities and going through traumatic experiences, our faith is rooted in His word when Jesus calls us, saying "Come to me you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). Paul also says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13).

The mushrooming of a wide range of churches, cults, and sects produces a variety of teachings and different interpretations of the Bible. There's also heresy within the leaders. This calls for maturity and consistent Christian living. Jesus teaches about being fruitful as a standard measure of a mature Christian.

1) Watch out

As women of faith, we need to carefully examine teachers and their doctrines so that we don't get lost. False doctrines are affecting our families, churches, and communities. There's freedom of association and worship in many places in the world but women of faith must not settle for anything without prayer and analysis.

2) By their fruit you shall know them

Jesus clearly says we can distinguish between true and false teachers. We need to pray for the spirit of discernment to identify the real gospel. We need to have a culture of Bible study and fellowship. As the first Methodists were nicknamed Bible moths, let's read and share the Word of God, and the Word of God will be our daily bread together with prayers in all circumstances!

Jesus teaches that each fruit tree produces its own kind of fruit, no figs can come out of thornbushes or vice versa. Let us teach what we believe without double standards in life. This is a big call for us to come back to genuine Christian living. Christianity is not a secretive movement but an open and real way of existence; therefore, by our fruit the world will know us. The churches have a higher percentage of women than men, so our influence and impact need to be felt all the time. The message is against pretense, we need to take a step of faith and fight falsehood in the church.

3) Bear good fruit

Fellow sisters let's continue to be consistent in fruit-bearing. Let's evaluate our work and exhibit good behavior and the moral standards of the desired character. I usually say character is who you are in your private life. Jesus refers to those leaders and teachers who deliberately spread false doctrine in order to achieve personal goals as bad trees. Let's disassociate ourselves from such behavior. It is possible to bear good fruit and we shall be known for what we produce.

May God bless us all as we strive to make a difference in the world!

Amen

- Rev. Gloria Hokonya, Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, Southern and East Africa Area



Mariama

Mariama was sixteen years old when she was



impregnated by her father. Her teacher found out about the pregnancy and reported it to the Domestic Violence Unit of the Ghana Police as she was worried for Mariama's future. The Unit referred her to the Ark Foundation Shelter for Survivors of Domestic Violence, founded by Dr. Angela Dwamena-Aboagye.

A DNA test on Mariama revealed that indeed her father was responsible for her pregnancy, but he denied everything in the presence of the attendees. Mariama was devastated. She said, "I felt lonely and confused. How could he? It was tough, really tough. A little girl carrying a baby. However, I was sheltered, fed, clothed, and cared for by the Ark Foundation. I have safely delivered a baby girl. I named her Emmanuella. The Ark Foundation is working on establishing contact with my maternal family about how to get me and my baby resettled. I live at the shelter with many girls who have stories like mine. We are happy with the support the shelter gives us. I have been enrolled in a school. My baby and I are doing well. I am patiently waiting for a fresh start in life outside the shelter. I need help to be able to

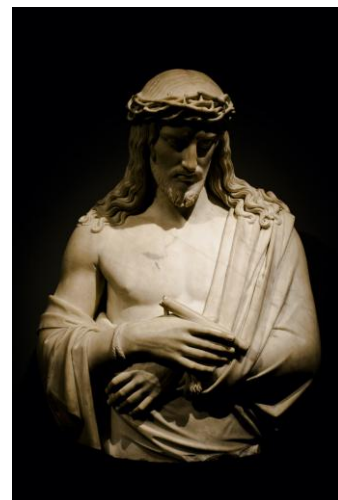
resettle. I have dreams for myself and my baby. I wish to be a medical doctor."

If you want to find more or to donate, please access www.arkfoundationghana.org

This story was published with the agreement of Dr. Angela Dwamena-Aboagye, through Rev. Jemima Amanor, the former West Africa Area President.

Nations resist Christ (Acts 4:8, 25-26)

"... Why did the nations rage, and the people devise vain things? The kings of the earth came, and the rulers were assembled together against the Lord and against His Christ".



Acts chapter 4 is an account of how the authorities in Jerusalem continued to deny the power of Christ, even after His miraculous resurrection. Having performed a miracle upon a crippled man, Peter and John were harshly reprimanded by the religious authorities. It was because Jesus' Name was used for healing. Yet the disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, continued to perform signs and wonders in the Name of Jesus Christ. Where Christians are filled by the Holy Spirit and are "performing signs and wonders" in Christ's Name, these are signs that Jesus is honored and therefore not being resisted.

But what about today? Is Christ still being resisted?

According to a recent finding of the Pew Research Centre, Christianity is the world's most persecuted religion. In the Middle East and in the Indian Sub-Continent, Christians face strong persecution. The same is true with the persecution faced by Christians in some parts of Africa and South America. In Europe today many no longer believe in the God of the Bible. In the United States of America, Australia, and New Zealand, the teaching of the Bible in public schools is prohibited. This reflects the continuing resistance towards Jesus Christ.

- Rev. Dr. Mele'ana Puloka, Tonga Unit, South Pacific Area

News



Update on The Thursdays in Black Waterfall Tapestry of Solidarity and Resistance



Update on The Thursdays in Black Waterfall Tapestry of Solidarity and Resistance
The Thursdays in Black Waterfall Tapestry of Solidarity and Resistance was launched at the World Council of Churches (WCC) 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, in September 2022. Over six meters wide and five meters long, the tapestry has over 180 panels hand-crafted by people all over the world who share personal pain and hope to overcome sexual and gender-based violence. Many of the panels came with extraordinarily moving stories behind their creation. A survivor of abuse lamenting what she lost for so long but has now recovered. School

children drawing passionate anti-abuse messages and promoting a helpline. A church pastor brings his congregation together to reflect on how violence can affect everyone. And the artist and seamstress who sewed all the panels together in prayer and love.

The tapestry and the stories behind the panels and creation make a profound contribution to our collective efforts to overcome sexual and gender-based violence. The personal artwork, the emotion they convey, and the stories behind them, raise awareness of the prevalence of abuse and violence but also the solidarity and hope possible. The World Council of Churches is helping to make the tapestry and the stories behind them more visible through smaller exhibits that can be displayed in church and community settings, and in a beautiful publication that will display all the panels and stories behind them.

For more information visit https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/thursdays-in-black#waterfall-tapestry_or_emailmedia@wcc-coe.org.

- Sara Speicher, WCC

The World President, Sipiwe Chisvo, attends the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church Women's Missionary Council 20th Quadrennial Assembly in Jacksonville

The Assembly theme was: Be Bold, Face Now, Embrace Next, and See New: While Soaring with The Missionaries. The primary objectives of the trip were to convey greetings on behalf of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW) to the Assembly and to raise awareness about WFMUCW and its programs.



The Assembly was well-attended by women from various districts in the USA. Here is a brief overview of the key events during the days when the President attended the assembly:

Day 1 (Saturday, June 24th): Administrative staff meetings took place, and the World President arrived in the afternoon, welcomed by local officials.

Day 2 (Sunday, June 25th): The World President attended a church service at Central Metropolitan CME Church in Jacksonville, where she was introduced to the congregation and gave greetings. Later, Assembly Committee Meetings were held, followed by a three-hour prayer and praise service involving Episcopal Districts.

Day 3 (Monday, June 26th): The day began with a banner procession, and the World President was among the ecumenical guests who greeted the Assembly. Devotions were led by Bishop Charley Hames Jr., focusing on themes of courage, identity, and faith. Bible Study, conducted over four days, explored the theme "Be Bold Enough to Face Victory" and emphasized the importance of conviction, courage, and embracing one's identity as a

child of God. On the third day, The President of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church Missionary Council presented a report highlighting the council's 105th anniversary, grassroots contributions, conference attendance, and scholarship support for students. The day concluded with Holy Communion, where Bishop Clarence Kelby Heath delivered a message emphasizing salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

HKMS of East Asia report: Deborah Grace from Malaysia and Yu-En from Taiwan

Due to the impact of the ongoing pandemic, our first training program in May 2022 had to be conducted online. Despite the physical distance among us, we found ways to connect and engage with one another. During the ice-breaking activity, we shared the fruits we had prepared, symbolizing the diverse experiences and backgrounds we brought to the table. This simple act of sharing sparked a profound reflection on this year's theme: "Go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." Throughout our training, we

delved into the concept of bearing fruit and explored the factors that contribute to our ability to make a lasting impact. We discussed the significance of dedication, perseverance, and continuous effort in achieving meaningful outcomes. It became evident that the joy of harvesting and witnessing the fruits of our labor is the culmination of sustained hard work over an extended period of time.

During our time together in Brazil, we cherished the opportunity to meet and connect with sisters from diverse regions and countries. We united in worship, delved into deep biblical study, and explored the essence of leadership. Additionally, we learned about the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which served as a framework for understanding the challenges we face and the role we can play in making a





unanimously voted to designate the Day as a period of non-violence and cease-fire. This year's theme is "Actions for Peace: Our Ambition for the #GlobalGoals". It is a call to action that recognizes our individual and collective responsibility to foster peace. Peace has the main role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and realizing the SDGs can create a culture of peace. Furthermore, 2023 commemorates the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. For more information, please access: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-peace>

difference. Just as cultivating crops requires patience and tending to each small step of the process, we recognize the importance of taking gradual, intentional actions. We understood that perfection cannot be achieved overnight, but rather through consistent dedication to continuous improvement. In our journey, we drew inspiration from the words of Romans 8:28, which reminded us that God works for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

As Helen Kim Scholars, we embrace the responsibility to share the knowledge and experiences gained from our training program with our respective churches and societies. We are motivated by the parable in Matthew 13:8, where some seeds fell on fertile ground and produced a bountiful harvest. We aspire to sow seeds of positive change, striving to make a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold impact in our communities.

In conclusion, our training experience has been transformative, enabling us to deepen our understanding of bearing fruit, both individually and collectively. We recognize that the journey toward making a lasting impact is ongoing, but we are committed to taking the necessary steps, however small, to contribute to positive change. Together, united by our faith and shared purpose, we are empowered to face challenges, embrace growth, and bear fruit that will endure for generations to come.



Announcements

International Day of Peace - 21 September

The International Day of Peace was established in 1981 by the United Nations General Assembly. In 2001, the General Assembly

The 22nd World Methodist Council

The 22nd World Methodist Council will be held between 13-18 August 2024 in Gothenburg, Sweden.

This is a great opportunity for all Methodist and Wesleyan churches to come together.

If you are interested in this event, please access the following links:

<http://worldmethodistconference.com/event-information/>
https://issuu.com/wmcouncil/docs/september_2023_ffl_pdf?fr=xKAE9_zU1NQ



WORLD EXECUTIVE 2022 – 2026 CONTACT DETAILS

TITLE	NAME	EMAIL
WORLD OFFICERS:		
President	Sipiwe Chisvo	world.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Ivonne Pereira Diaz	world.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Secretary	Louise Wilson	world.secretary@wfmucw.org
Treasurer	Mrs Ngui Ting	world.treasurer@wfmucw.org
President Emerita	Alison Judd	president.emerita@wfmucw.org
AREA OFFICERS:		
Southern & East Africa:		
President	Patricia Mapani	seafrica.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Rebecca Matongo	seafrica.vice-president@wfmucw.org
West Africa:		
President	Muriel Nelson	westafrica.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Marcelline Beda	westafrica.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Latin America:		
President	Jessica Milagros Solar Munayco	latinamerica.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Claudia Lima Carmargo Lira	latinamerica.vice-president@wfmucw.org
North America:		
President	Lois Grant-Hector	northamerica.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Jeanette Bouknight	northamerica.vice-president@wfmucw.org
East Asia:		
President	Mary Devadason	eastasia.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Chao Hui Min	eastasia.vice-president@wfmucw.org
South Asia:		
President	Rajini Jegasothy	southasia.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Glory George	southasia.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Europe: Britain & Ireland:		
President	Barbara Easton	britainireland.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Wanda Hogan	britainireland.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Europe: Continental:		
President	Lilla Kardosné Lakatos	europa.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Filipa Teixeira	europa.vice-president@wfmucw.org
South Pacific:		
President	Olive Tanielu	southpacific.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Rev Gloria Marke	southpacific.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Editor Tree of Life	Ligia Istrate	treeoflife@wfmucw.org
Web Manager	Naomi Allison	webmaster@wfmucw.org
UN REPRESENTATIVES:		
New York	Joan Capel	un@wfmucw.org
New York	Alexandria Carson	
Latin America	Karen Danytza	
Archivist	Judith Siaba	world.archivist@wfmucw.org



Editor: Ligia Istrate

ligiaistrate@gmail.com

Cover design, interior design:
Cristian Istrate

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